

My Appropriations Committee staff worked very, very hard with both the Republican and Democratic side on the parts of this piece of legislation that required work from the Appropriations Committee. They have worked weekends, evenings—long, long days—drafting and redrafting and redrafting to make sure that people on both sides approved of what they wanted. Now, the American people expect us to vote. We are here. Let's vote.

I am happy to see Republican amendments or Democratic amendments come up. But it is one thing to talk about them on the news shows or on social media or trying to talk to the press in the halls and make sound bites; it is another thing to actually vote. Let's vote. Let's let people know where we stand. That is how the people in our State know where we stand.

Frankly, those who are afraid they may cast a vote that creates problems—but we are not here to cast only popular votes. I have cast more votes than all but one person in the history of this country. I have cast well over 16,000, almost 17,000 votes. I am sure I can go back over those votes and find some and say: Hmm, in retrospect, I might have voted the other way. But I voted.

What we are doing in not bringing this up and getting this done, we are trying to vote "maybe." I don't know anybody in my State, Republican or Democrat, who elected Senators to say: We want you to vote "maybe." No. We want you to vote.

It doesn't mean the people of my State will agree on every vote. I hope that they will agree on a lot of them. But I will represent my State. I will represent my conscience. But I will represent the Senate, and I will represent my oath of office. My oath of office is not to just sit here and do nothing but talk to the press and others; my oath of office is, I respect the Constitution, and I will vote. So let's hope they vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

INVEST IN AMERICA ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today, the Senate will decide whether to move the bipartisan infrastructure bill closer toward a final vote.

Like I said before, I am quite confident that, out of 100 U.S. Senators, there are 100 of us who believe the bill

is imperfect. This isn't exactly the bill I would have written on my own in my office, and 99 of my colleagues would say the very same thing. This is a compromise product crafted by colleagues with big, principled differences in a Senate with the narrowest possible split.

But in my view, what our early statesmen called "internal improvement" is a core government responsibility. The American people need roads, bridges, ports, and airports to build their businesses, build their families, and build their lives. Republicans and Democrats have radically different visions these days, but both those visions include physical infrastructure that works for all of our citizens.

As the Kentucky Farm Bureau wrote to me recently, the investments this bill will make are not just necessary; in many cases they are overdue. Our country has real needs in this area.

There are many outstanding amendments that are important, that would improve this legislation, and that deserve votes before the Senate is asked to vote on the final passage of this bill. The full Senate deserves its full chance to shape this important legislation. I hope Senators can work together in a bipartisan way to get more amendments up and continue improving this important bill. Our colleagues on both sides deserve to be heard.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. The Democratic leader is indicating, in a few days, he will thrust the Senate into an ultrapartisan showdown over the staggeringly reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats want to ram through later this year.

The size and the scope of Chairman SANDERS' socialist shopping list will make every disagreement we had in landing the infrastructure compromise look like a rounding error—new permanent welfare with no work requirements, reams of Green New Deal mandates, massive tax hikes that shrink wages and kill jobs, government meddling in childcare that would privilege certain families' choices over others, amnesty for illegal immigrants in the middle of a border crisis.

At a time Democrats' spending already—already—has inflation hammering American families, Republicans could not be more eager to debate our colleagues on all of these subjects. We can't wait to get Democrats on record over many more trillions—trillions—of dollars and reckless borrowing to fund socialist spending on radical policies that families are not asking for.

Our philosophy is the polar opposite. Republican policies would create good jobs, strong wage growth, and stable prices for middle-class families, just like our country had just a year and a half ago—the most pro-worker economy in a generation, just a year and a half ago.

Republicans want to give working families the tools and the opportunity

to build the lives that they want. Democrats want to force them to live the lives the Democrats want.

The stakes in this debate could not be higher, and very soon the country will see it aired out here right on the Senate floor.

The Democratic leader will be putting the full radicalism of the far left right here on this floor. He is making every one of his Members vote on nothing less—nothing less—than Chairman SANDERS' dream shopping list. Every American family will know exactly where their Senator stands.

NOMINATION OF DAVID H. CHIPMAN

Mr. McCONNELL. On one final matter, I have already discussed how the Biden administration has nominated a proud and proven opponent of American's constitutional rights to run the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

I don't think there could be any more evidence that David Chipman is the wrong choice to serve as the top Federal administrator of firearms policy. He has a long record of hostility to lawful gun owners, a variety of complaints from those who worked with him in the past.

How could it get worse?

Mr. Chipman has suggested radical and sweeping steps, like banning private sales that are lawful, overriding State laws, and imposing sweeping restrictions on a class of weapons he has yet to clearly define.

Among some current and former ATF agents, he has earned a concerning reputation as a "bully" and "activist" whose extreme views threaten to undermine the trust the Agency needs to conduct oversight. And sources within the ATF have also come forward describing alleged racially discriminatory comments the nominee made in the workplace regarding personnel decisions.

So even a few days ago, it was not difficult to realize this is an instance in which the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, should take a pass. But somehow, in just the last few days, it has actually gotten worse.

Earlier this week, news reports indicated that Mr. Chipman had failed to disclose to our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee a TV appearance he made several years ago. This wasn't just any TV appearance; Mr. Chipman had granted an interview to a propaganda network overseen by the Chinese Government.

A new letter to the Senate, signed by seven former career ATF agents, summed it up this way: Mr. Chipman's views and record would "create serious and long-lasting problems for the Bureau and the effective execution of its law enforcement mission."

The Senate has spent quite enough time flirting with this profoundly misguided nomination. The American people deserve a trustworthy steward leading the ATF, with a record of respecting their rights and respecting his or

her colleagues. It is long past time the Biden administration revisit this decision and send us somebody who fits that description.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3684, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Schumer (for Sinema) amendment No. 2137, in the nature of a substitute.

Carper-Capito amendment No. 2131 (to amendment No. 2137), to strike a definition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, this week, the Senate has been considering historic infrastructure legislation.

We have seen a lot of positives in this process. Twenty-two amendments have been processed, and 12 of those amendments have been adopted. Many of those are bipartisan amendments that our fellow Senators have worked on together.

On Thursday, we saw the process hit a snag. We have colleagues who sincerely want to debate their remaining amendments, but we had objections that prevented our votes from moving forward. In my view, that is unfortunate. I want everybody's voice to be heard because a number of the amendments awaiting action would actually improve this legislation, and, again, we have consensus on both sides on that. I hope we can reach agreement on a package of amendments that can receive votes before we pass this bill in final.

In particular, I support an amendment that Senator CORNYN from Texas would like to offer to allow States to use previously appropriated COVID funding to finance infrastructure projects.

When I began negotiating with the White House in April and May, this was one of the things that I put on the table with the President, and I know the G-20 has also had this on the table with the President. So it has been a topic of great discussion both here in the Senate but also with the White House as well. The Cornyn-Padilla amendment would unlock tens of billions of dollars—more for highway,

transit, and housing infrastructure—without adding to the cost of this legislation.

I plan to vote for cloture at 12 noon because this infrastructure legislation makes important investments in our Nation's future. I am a West Virginian, and all West Virginians and all Americans will benefit from the roads, bridges, water infrastructure, broadband, and other modes of core infrastructure that would be financed through this bill, but I believe something more foundational than infrastructure is at stake here.

We need to demonstrate to the American people that we can work together in this Congress to pass major legislation that benefits our country and, I might add, legislation that we have passed more than a few times in the past. Infrastructure is that perfect place to do that.

Senator CARPER and I led the Environment and Public Works Committee with the surface transportation reauthorization bill, and the Presiding Officer is on that committee. We passed that out of our committee with unanimous support, and we also passed a drinking water bill that passed out of our committee with unanimous support but also out of this body with 89 votes. Both of those bills are included in this package in their entirety. Bipartisan bills reported by Commerce and the Energy Committees are also included.

I certainly appreciated Chairman CARPER's leadership and partnership throughout the entire process. I appreciate the efforts of our colleagues in the G-22 who have worked with each other tirelessly and with the Biden administration to get us to this point.

We will soon have a chance to advance this infrastructure legislation toward final passage. Is this bill perfect? No—no compromise legislation ever is—but it will make a big difference in modernizing our country's infrastructure. More than that, we will demonstrate that both Republicans and Democrats can come together and do big things that move our country forward.

I have just a bit of a recitation to remind folks what is in this bill. I will try to speed this part up.

The bill provides \$303.5 billion over 5 years for Federal highway programs—a 35-percent increase. That investment represents historic funding for our roads and bridges and provides States with the long-term certainty that they need and flexibility that they need to complete projects.

The bill ensures that 90 percent of the funding is distributed by formula—very predictable. It gives the States the certainty they need to prioritize their projects. For West Virginia, that means over \$3 billion over 5 years. That is a huge investment for our State and much needed.

This bill also creates something that I am passionate about, the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program to

award \$2 billion in competitive grants over 5 years to improve and expand roads and bridges in rural America. I am especially excited that this program has a 25-percent set-aside for projects that support the completion of the Appalachia Development Highway System, otherwise known as ADHS. That set-aside means ADHS projects in West Virginia are eligible to compete for \$500 million over 5 years in discretionary grants. This package will move our Corridor H project along significantly because we know that that project will be getting \$195 million, and this grant program opens up the possibility of more. This is a vital connection in our State for our tourism and our economy. It also will open us up even broader to the east coast.

West Virginia will receive \$506 million to refund and repair our State's bridges, addressing a critical need certainly in our State and across the Nation. This funding is part of the single largest investment in bridge infrastructure since the construction of the Interstate Highway System.

Briefly, the bill recognizes that broadband is core infrastructure and prioritizes unserved communities. This is the area I have gotten really the most questions about: What is this going to do for West Virginia, for the digital divide areas that are still unserved?

Today, education, tourism, healthcare all rely on high internet speeds. I launched my Capito Connect Initiative in 2015 to help expand broadband infrastructure in our State. Many communities that lack adequate broadband are already struggling economically. It is impossible to compete for jobs if a community cannot offer good internet service, causing these areas to fall even further behind. And I will say, since the pandemic, rural America—as we have known who live in rural America—is a great and wonderful place to live. More people in congested areas are realizing there are a lot more pluses in rural America than what, maybe, they might have realized over a year ago.

The bill invests \$65 billion to help fix our country's digital divide. That funding would support a formula-based grant program to States and also supports competitive grants, like the USDA's ReConnect Program.

Additionally, this bill makes large investments in clean and safe drinking water; it provides resources that will put West Virginians to work cleaning up our abandoned mines and orphaned wells.

Every Senator could stand here and tell similar stories about the investment that this bill will make in his or her own State. This is the perfect time for us to come together toward the end of a summer that has been full of stops and starts, and we need to pass this legislation that will benefit every American.

I hope my colleagues will join me to advance this important legislation toward its passage.